

Indian Origins of Filipino Customs

Contributed by Vedic Empire

Early Relations with India The early relations between the Philippines and the Indian empires of Sri-Vijaya and Majapahit were commercial and cultural, not political. As a free and independent people, the early Filipinos carried on trade with Borneo, Celebes, Java, Sumatra, and other countries of Southeast Asia. And through Sri-Vijaya and Majapahit, they received India's cultural influences. The early contact between India and the Philippines was decidedly indirect via Malaysia.

India's Cultural Influences The impact of Indian civilization on the Philippines profoundly affected the culture of the Filipinos. The Brahmanistic elements in ancient Filipino religion and the names of their gods and mythological heroes were of Indian origin. The term Bathala (supreme god of the ancient Tagalog) originated from the Sanskrit Bhattara Guru, meaning "the highest of the gods". The sarong (skirt) and potong (turban) of the pre-Spanish Filipinos and the embroidered shawls of the present-day Muslim Filipino women reveal Indian influences. The ancient Filipino alphabet originated from India. About 25% of the words in the Tagalog language are Sanskrit terms. Among such words are dala (fishnet), asawa (spouse), diwa (thought), puri (honor), lakambini (princess), and wika (language). Filipino literature and folklore show the impress of India. The Maranao epic Darangan is Indian in plot and characterization. The Agusan legend of a man named Manubo Ango, who was turned into stone, resembles the story of Ahalya in the Hindu epic Ramayana. The tale of the Ifugao legendary hero, Balituk, who obtained water from the rock with his arrow, is similar to Arjuna's adventure in Mahabharata, another Hindu epic. Many Filipino customs are of Indian origin. Among them are the following: (1) placing a sampaguita flower garland around the neck of a visitor upon his arrival and departure as a symbol of hospitality and friendship; (2) before marriage, a groom gives a dowry to the bride's parents and renders domestic services to his future in-laws; (3) when the guests throw rice on the bride and groom after the wedding; and (4) when a childless couple goes on a pilgrimage to a holy shrine, believing that the god of shrine will grant their prayer for fertility. Another Indian influence is seen in the decorative art and metal work of the early Filipinos, and in their use of brass, bronze, copper, and tin. The boat-lute, a musical instrument in southern Philippines, is of Indian origin. Finally, about 5% of the blood in Filipino veins is Indian. Because of their lineage, the Filipinos possess dignity of bearing, indifference to pain, and an accepting and faithful outlook on life.

<http://www.geocities.com/CollegePark/Pool/1644/precolonial.html> Wikipedia on Hinduism in the Philippines